Truth, Myth and Oliver Stone's 'JFK'

Regarding "Oliver Stone Builds His Own Myths," by Robert Scheer (Dec. 15):

In the beginning of "JFK," President Dwight D. Eisenhower warns Americans of the dangers of the military-industrial complex having too much power.

Stone goes on from there to build a case for a massive conspiracy to assassinate President John F. Kennedy and later an even bigger cover-up, both active and passive.

Many people in the media have assailed Stone on several fronts. Unfortunately they conveniently skirt the big picture, which is that Eisenhower's ominous warning has in fact become a living reality, a nightmare even worse and more tragic than what the New York Times' Tom Wicker calls "Mr. Stone's nightmarish visions of conspiracy."

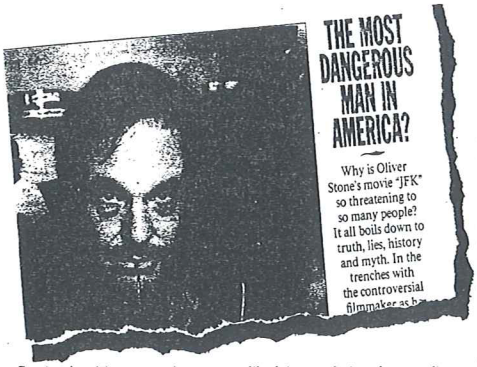
Even if Stone's specific allegations are not entirely correct, he is certainly right that a lot of opportunists took advantage of the assassination to line their pockets, foolhardily pursue the Vietnam War and abuse democracy through both misinformation and covert operations for decades to come. Our leaders have failed, and it takes artists like Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen and now Stone to make dramatic social-realistic works in the spirit of Swift or Dickens to try to bring us to our senses.

I remain an optimist because I know we have both the technological and human resources to confront and solve our problems—but first what is needed is an honest assessment of how we became so corrupted.

Thank God for Oliver Stone giving us his version. In America, we already have the freedom most of the world is fighting for. Let's use our precious freedom to save ourselves.

JEFF DOWD
Santa Monica

Dowd is a producer of the forthcoming film "Zebrahead," which Stone executive-produced.



Spreading the Blame

Why do I hate the Los Angeles Times so much? Because its profile of Stone tells us where he ate lunch while making the deals and how Michael Ovitz blessed the film, and it speaks of Stone's brave "courage" against his critics. It does all this without giving a clear voice to those critics or addressing Stone's morality.

Compare this Calendar article to Tom Wicker's article in the New York Times. Wicker actually adds to our knowledge, pointing out specifically that many of Garrison's critics are not just men who accuse him of being gay, but people intimate with the facts, doubters of the Warren Commission, people skeptical that Kennedy's barely articulated notions of getting out of Vietnam were at the trigger of his assassination.

This point is not even addressed in Scheer's piece. More popular conspiracy theories such as mob involvement or Fidel Castro's participation are not even brought up. The L.A. Times, like Stone, continues to astound me with its disregard for getting to the bottom of things.

The cover of Calendar suggests that Stone is dangerous. Not nearly as much as the L.A. Times' mentality of glossing over true examination of its subject matter.

Scheer leaves us with (paraphrasing) this thought: If the audience questions the official truth after seeing "JFK," why blame Stone? If the audience doesn't question Stone's official truth, why blame the L.A. Times?

C. LANDER
Hollywood

Welcome to Reality

So Stone thinks the Warren Commission was wrong. Welcome to the world, Mr. Stone.

As far back as 1979, a House select committee concluded that Kennedy was probably killed as a result of a conspiracy. Even further back—about the time Stone was getting out of high school—many of us were convinced that the Warren Commission was wrong in its "lone-gunman theory."

All we really wanted was the truth out of the many theories that abounded at the time: the L.B.J. theory, the Cuban theory, the Mafia theory, the Texas right-wing-radicals theory and, yes, even the Clay Shaw-CIA-secret government theory.

Yet, no matter what theory you liked, it was obvious from wading through the Warren Report that the commission had seized on the lone-gunman idea and set about to "prove" it. Now it seems that Stone has chosen an equally shaky theory, one already discredited in court, and intends to "prove" it as well.

Unlike the Warren Report, I'm sure Stone's movie will be very entertaining. But, as with that flawed document, it appears there will still be one thing missing: Respect for the truth.

JOHN SHARPE
Cerritos

Single-Bullet Theory

A paragraph near the end of Scheer's article talked about the "single-bullet theory" and suggested it was unbelievable. Immediately after that paragraph, Scheer states: "This and other evidence led the House Select Committee on Assassinations in 1979 to conclude after a two-year investigation that 'President John F. Kennedy was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy.'"

Scheer's article leads one to believe that the House committee disagreed with the single-bullet theory and that this disagreement, along with other evidence, led to its conclusion that there was a conspiracy.

In fact, the committee, of which I was the assistant deputy chief counsel, concluded that the single-bullet theory *was valid*. While the committee was, like a great many other Americans, initially very skeptical, after two years of investigation, including consultations with the country's foremost experts in forensic pathology and ballistics, it was compelled, *by the evidence*, to accept the single-bullet theory.

In this regard, the results of neutron activation analysis, which permitted a very precise analysis of the bullet, as well as fragments located at the scene, were completely consistent with the theory that a single bullet wounded both President Kennedy and Texas Gov. John Connally.

While Scheer is correct in stating that the Select Committee on Assassinations concluded that Kennedy was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy, he neglects to state that it also concluded that the President was struck by two bullets, both of which were fired by Lee Harvey Oswald from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository.

KENNETH KLEIN
Los Angeles

Stone on America

Will Stone ever have anything good to say about America? Will he ever forgive being sent to Vietnam? Will he ever make a movie about a liberal film producer who earns tons and tons of money wallowing in American crime, corruption and moral decay?

TONY THOMAS
Burbank

Exploiting Again

A brief look at the corpus of Stone's work would indicate that he has never done anything other than pander to the "politically correct."

From the prevarications of "Midnight Express" and "Salvador," to the amoral "Wall Street," the pontificating "Platoon" and the groovy "The Doors," Stone has strived for a '60s relevance that now seems so incredibly clichéd and sophomoric.

In "JFK" he is simply exploiting again, this time the stale cottage industry in assassination-plot paranoia and mythology, which has not produced a single concrete indictment in more than a quarter-century.

"The Most Dangerous Man in America?" Seriously now. Telling liberals what they want to hear is the safest choice any producer can make in Hollywood today, and it is a choice that has well served Stone's career.

PAT FERRIS
Los Angeles

Sifting Truth From Myth

There may be a truth about the Kennedy assassination that we don't know, but we sure don't get it from Stone.

He has said that the core of his position is the Abraham Zapruder film of the shooting, which he claims proves that the shot to Kennedy's head had to come from the front.

While it is true that the President's head and body did undulate backward, a close look at the film shows that blood and other matter from the head shot burst out *forward*. Anyone who has seen films or stroboscopic pictures of bullet hits knows that matter is ejected not from entry holes, but from exit holes, moving in the same direction as the bullet. The Zapruder film thus shows a back-to-front trajectory. Stone's starting premise is therefore wrong.

Stone says his goal is to create a "counter-myth" to the "official myth." But a myth is a lie, and a counter-myth is just a counter-lie. I think we have better uses for our time and money than to support another lie.

MARK LEINWAND
Woodland Hills

Footnotes to History

"I'm not hiding what I'm doing," Stone tells us. "We're putting out a screenplay which is highly footnoted as to our choices and sources so it can be studied and picked apart."

Stone may not be hiding what he is doing from those who secure the footnotes to the screenplay, but it is total sophistry to tender this as a justification for the license the dramatist has taken, which is not footnoted in the theater and provides for generations of folks a seemingly authoritative account of an extremely significant historical event.

JACK A. DAHLSTRUM
Cathedral City

Single-*Auteur* Theory

Well, Stone has managed to convince me beyond a doubt: "JFK" was definitely shot by one lone nut.

ROBERT GORE
Santa Monica

Now that Stone has given us the inside story on the assassination, perhaps his next film will expose the conspiracy behind the sinking of the Titanic.

Scheming officials at a rival ship line, the infamous iceberg diversion involving a white-washed U.S. merchant ship, lurking Swiss submarines equipped with silent torpedoes.

You know the facts, Ollie. Go for it!

MARTIN E. MULLEN JR.
South Pasadena

Letters should be brief and must include the writer's name, address and phone number. No pseudonyms may be used. Letters are subject to editing and condensation. Mail to Calendar Letters, Los Angeles Times, Times Mirror Square, Los Angeles 90053. **Letters may be faxed: (213) 237-7630.**